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NYS BUDGET SHOWS SUSTAINED COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT

***Legislature and Governor continue robust investment in state park system
and protection of natural areas***

(ALBANY, NY) - Parks & Trails New York praised the Legislature and Governor for passing a SFY 2021-22 budget today that establishes an environmental legacy for generations to come, demonstrating a sustained commitment to shared greenspace and public health.

Major highlights from the budget include \$110 million in capital funding for the NY Parks 100 program, a \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund, \$75 million for DEC's Adventure NY capital program, and the historic \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Environmental Bond Act.

"As we look to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are grateful that the legislature has chosen to place the historic \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act before the voters of the state, and continued the state's historic investment in protecting and preserving our natural environment," said Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York. "Millions of New Yorkers discovered or rekindled their appreciation for our state's parks, trails, and shared greenspace over the past year. This budget ensures that the state will continue to provide high-quality outdoor resources for all New Yorkers to enjoy.

We especially thank Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, Senators Kaminsky and Serrano, Assemblymembers Englebright and O'Donnell, and Governor Cuomo, for their continued support of providing safe, quality places for outdoor recreation, preserving our natural environment, and protecting our precious natural resources."

NY Parks 100

The FY 2022 state budget provides the first \$110 million of investment in the new four-year NY Parks 100 program. This funding will be used to build and restore visitor centers, bathroom facilities and other critical infrastructure and revitalize the nation's oldest state park system, continuing to strengthen the role state parks and historic sites play in sustainable economic development and tourism in communities across the state. The budget also provides \$75 million in capital funding for DEC's Adventure NY program, ensuring the state can continue to improve access to state lands, rehabilitate campgrounds, and upgrade recreational facilities.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, parks and open spaces provided opportunities for solace and physical activity, and the state parks system saw a record 78 million visits in 2020. Continued capital investment in state parks is essential to ensuring a long-term recovery from the impact of coronavirus for our state's economy.

Environmental Protection Fund

The Governor and the Legislature once again have shown an historic commitment to preserving our precious natural environment through continued funding for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) at \$300 million in FY2022. This funding is used across the state to protect New York's water, land, and air, and to support the stewardship of our state parks, forests, and open space.

The funding for the EPF also continues the support for the Parks & Trails Partnership Grant at \$1 million for the upcoming year. This capacity-building grants program supports grassroots State Parks and Department of Environmental Conservation Friends groups in their critical work to support, strengthen and improve the state's parks, trails, historic sites and public lands. This competitive grants program will continue enabling these groups to expand their impact and strengthen the state's outdoor heritage of public-private partnership. Since 2015, 111 grants totaling \$2.7 million have been awarded, with funds used for innovative educational programs, capital projects, and capacity-building undertakings. These grants have leveraged more than \$1.5 million in private investment, directly benefiting park communities.

Funding for the Connect Kids to School initiative was maintained at \$2 million in this year's budget. This important program provides transportation to parks, nature and environmental education centers for children in K-12 education programs, giving school children the chance to experience nature and the environment, and providing an opportunity to engage the next generation in the stewardship of our shared resources.

Restore Mother Nature Environmental Bond Act

The budget includes an historic proposal for a \$3 Billion Restore Mother Nature Environmental Bond Act. However, unlike the other pieces of the budget which only require the Governor's signature to become law, this funding requires approval by the state's voters in November 2022.

If approved by the public, funding would be used to combat climate change, reduce flood risk, invest in resilient infrastructure and revitalize wildlife habitats. Funds would be used to preserve open space, conserve forest areas, replant trees, reduce contamination from agricultural and storm water runoff and expand renewable energy. Funding would include \$550 million for open space land conservation and recreation, and includes a requirement that 35 percent of the funds be used to benefit environmental justice communities.

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About Parks & Trails New York:

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is New York's leading statewide advocate for parks and trails. Since its founding in 1985, PTNY has been fighting to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space. With the support of members, supporters and partners from across the state, PTNY is a prominent voice for the protection and expansion of New York's magnificent state park system and multi-use trail network, including more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, and river walks. Learn more at www.ptny.org.